

PREFACE

India and Egypt are among few countries in the world that can claim the right to celebrate their relations for millennia. The objects found during excavations indicate traffic between India and Egypt as far back as 3000 BC. The people of the Indus Valley had trade relations with Egypt. It is a historical fact that Egyptian crew was drafted into the fleet of Alexander which was to sail down the Indus to the Ocean during the period after 331 B.C.

While the individual history of the two countries is histories of occupations and struggles for freedom, their bilateral relations have always been a story of friendship, cooperation and peaceful co-existence. It could be argued that the destiny of Egypt and India is interlinked. Both Egypt and parts of India came under the hegemony of different empires such as the Achaemenian Empire (648–330 BC), the Hellenistic Empire and the British Empire. Throughout history, every empire tried simultaneously to take over both countries to secure its position in the other.

Egypt and India worked to save the independence of each other and keep their relations strongly tied. An example of this was the Indo-Egyptian alliance against Portuguese colonialism during early sixteen century. Another example is the cooperation between the leadership of Egyptian national movement and its Indian counterpart against British imperialism. Mahatma Gandhi considered Saad Zaghloul Pasha his ideal in fighting British colonialism.

When Egyptian resistance fought against British troops at the Suez Zone in 1953, India contributed in making efforts to bring both the conflicting parties for talks in a cordial atmosphere. India strongly opposed the Anglo-French-Israeli aggression against Egypt in 1956 that aimed at reoccupying Egypt and changing its political regime. This support earned India the good will of Egyptians.

On its part, Egypt went out of its way in supporting India's military efforts to liberate Goa, Daman and Diu on 18th December 1961 by blocking Suez Canal in the face of Portuguese Navy, which was rushing to participate in action against India.

Interestingly, the fact that NATO was supporting the Portuguese military action did not deter Egypt of standing by India.

This close connection between Indian and Egyptian independence led Mahatma Gandhi to inform Egyptian people in 1931 “if India achieved its independence, Egypt would get its own soon”. Nehru’s awareness of this strategic relationship encouraged him to place Indo-Egyptian relations on the fulcrum of India’s West Asia policy. The pressures of cold war and its contradiction with the need of Egypt and India to assert their political and economic independence convinced them to adopt the policy of non-alignment. This brought both much closer and opened new arenas of cooperation.

Such unique relations deserve the academic interest of historians as well as social scientists as it stands as a model of international relations based on mutual benefit and goodwill. This study has been motivated by the fact that a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of any given relations between two nations is the key tool in finding ways to develop and widen these relations. The thesis is a modest attempt to narrate some facets of the history of Indo-Egyptian relations during the Nehru era. It explores some aspects of political and cultural relations. To construct the narrative of Indo-Egyptian relations (1947-1964), the thesis used the insights, which has been provided by the archival data, within the constraints of the limited capabilities of the researcher and the paucity of historical evidence consulted for the study.

It consists of six chapters. The introductory chapter provides historical overview of Indo-Egyptian relations. The second chapter presents literature review and highlights the important contribution made by different scholars. It also presents the hypotheses of this study and tests its validity and the objectives of the study. It also deals with the methodology, sources and chapterization of the study.

The third and fourth chapters provide a vertical overview of the case studies in Indo-Egyptian relations. The third chapter deals with Egyptian policy towards Kashmir and reflects how Kashmir issue was a challenge for Egyptian diplomacy in South Asia. It shows how Pakistan was a factor in India’s relations with Arab countries. The fourth chapter deals with India’s policy towards the nationalization of the Suez Canal as an example of India’s support for the Arab causes. The fifth chapter records the histories

of bilateral cultural relations that have always been the solid and enduring base of Indo-Egyptian friendship. It argued that cultural ties between Egypt and India were always the solid and enduring base for other aspects of relations. The concluding chapter argues that the strong foundations of Indo-Egyptian relations were established during this era by virtue of the close friendship between Jawaharlal Nehru and Gamal Abdel Nasser and their identical views regarding many regional and international issues. The subsequent leaderships continued to develop relations on those foundations. The strong political ties during the period of study contributed positively to the booming cultural relations.

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